

Walk with Me

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Summary: There wasn't much hope left. There never really was any in the first place, nothing to live for. Rylee is on her own with her partner, Dean, when they come across some strangers on the highway. Then life during the apocalypse starts getting a little more fascinating. (Daryl/OC)

1. Season 1: Chapter 1

"Boyâ€¦somethin' I ain't seen in a long time," Dean said as he gazed out over the afternoon scene of the high school. "Didn't you say you used to go here?" Rylee asked, turning to him and squinting her eyes because of the bright sunset. Dean nodded. "Yep. Dropped out my junior year." He held onto his rifle tightly as he hopped off the hood of the car they were standing on. Rylee followed and Dean took in one more moment of the sight. "This place was always a shithole," he mumbled to himself. She quietly laughed. "And why's that?" They both started walking toward the school. "Drug dealers, dumb rednecks, and a whole lot of whores," Dean answered, still moving forward and keeping his eyes straight ahead as Rylee followed closely behind. "You don't have much room to be talking about dumb rednecks," she replied with an amused tone. "You're a bit of a country hick yourself."

Most people couldn't tell by physical looks, but Rylee considered Dean a redneck, being born and raised in the south but she was too. Although, she wasn't as southern as he was. He can hunt and he's good at it. He rides around on a four-wheeler, and knows his way around a farm. But his appearance definitely didn't match that. He's covered in tattoos: sleeves on both arms, a large back piece, a chest piece, and the word 'fearless' tattooed across his knuckles in old English font.

"So, junior year, huh?" she asks after a few moments of silence. "Kind of a shame. You only had two years left." Dean scoffed. "I wanted to get the hell outta there. Never did think I would amount to

anything." He wiped his nose on his sleeve. "Don't none of that matter now anyway." Rylee nodded. "Yeah, I guess you're right." And he was. The world has pretty much ended, so it didn't matter if you were a high school dropout or had a college degree. It didn't matter anymore. There wasn't any need for paying jobs and currency. Half the population was gone, maybe more than that. Rylee always thought the Pythagorean Theorem, sine, cosine, tangent, quadrilateral, quadratic, and things like that were just useless math terms. But someone out there somewhere used them on a daily basis. Now, they really are useless.

The two maneuvered around the cars, trucks, and other vehicles on the road, stopping for a moment when they reached each one and looking in to see if there was anything useful inside. They did this for a while before Rylee spoke up again. "I dropped out, too. Sophomore year." Dean kept moving forward, but he replied without looking back, "I never would've guessed that." She wasn't too sure if he was being sarcastic or not, but she asked, "Why's that?" "You're pretty damn smart. I would've guessed you went to college at least." That made her laugh. Rylee never really thought of herself as smart. A quick thinker maybe, but never smart. She never made decent grades in school, but then again she never tried or did anything. "Yeah, you think that," she said, and that was the end of that conversation.

The sun would be down soon, and it was never a good idea to be out after dark. That's when the deadlies are most active. Dean didn't seem to mind, though. Rylee wished she could be like him sometimes. He isn't scared of anything. She supposed that's why he has his 'fearless' tattoo. Out of the time she's known him, the words "I'm scared" have never come out of his mouth. He's the most courageous person she knew or have ever known. If he hadn't took her in when he found her, she'd been dead a long time ago. Rylee's entire family was killed when the turn happened and she went off on my own. She ended up at some kind of warehouse and Dean and his mother was there. He almost killed her at first, but then something stopped him from blowing her brains out. Still to this day, she hasn't found out exactly what it was that stopped him.

They eventually made it to the high school and came up to the doors to the front office. "Let's hope these bad boys aren't locked," Dean said. He grabbed the handle to the door and pulled it open with ease. "Ladies first," he said as he smiled at Rylee. She rolled her eyes and walked in and he followed, closing the door behind them. Once they were in the front office, they stopped. "Alright," Dean started. "If I remember correctly the nurse's office is right down the hall. We'll run in, grab what we need, and get out. We need to head back to camp before dark. It'll be close but we have to hurry." Rylee looked at him. "Why didn't we just turn back?" He looked down for a moment, then looked back up to her. "We can't. Samantha ain't doing too well. We need anything we can find."

Dean turned away and quickly, but quietly made his way through the doors to the office. There was a hallway on each side of the office and a large staircase in front of them. He looked both ways, checking each hallway, then headed towards the one on the right side. He motioned Rylee to keep up and she speed up a little. But suddenly he stopped and held his arm out in front of her. "What is it?" she whispered. He pointed to a classroom with the door standing wide open. "So?" she asked, but then her question was immediately answered

when she heard a bone-chilling growl. Dean looked over his shoulder. "No gunfire," he whispered, pausing between words to make sure he was making himself clear. He pulled his knife out, slowly creeping towards the classroom they heard the growling coming from. Dean then turned to Rylee, placing his finger over his lips. She nodded, then he got up against the wall next to the doorway to the classroom and so did she. Then suddenly, he jumped into the doorway and went into the classroom. Rylee could hear the deadly's growls get louder so it must have seen him, but Dean wasn't making a sound. She listened, but then heard something strange. He was laughing. "What's so funny?" she asks, but he ignores her question. "Well, well, well. Look what we have here," he said, sounding amused. It was frustrating not knowing what he was so happy about, so Rylee turned to go into the classroom. As soon as she steps inside, she sees him standing in front of a deadly that's pinned against the wall by a large teacher's desk. Dean shook his head and said, "If it ain't Mrs. Bitchface." "Pardon?" Rylee asks, thinking he was talking to her. "Not you. Her," he said as he pointed to the deadly. "Tenth grade science teacher. We hated each other with a burning passion. I thought the old hag was deadâ€¦well, before the turn happened, I thought she was. Can't believe she was teaching that long." It growled at Dean and reached out for him meanwhile Rylee observed her. She had long, dirty hair that came down just past her shoulders. The skin under her eyes sagged and her lips were pretty much gone. Her arms seemed to be missing some meat also, probably due to the other deadlies feeding on her. She wore a long blue dress that was drenched in blood and she had a very noticeable wound in the crease between her shoulder and neck. It was a bite. "Guessing the bite killed her," she said. "Good," Dean replied, then lifted the knife. "I always hated her and her smart ass mouth."

Suddenly, the sound of metal slicing bone filled the room and blood splattered on the wall behind the deadly when the knife exited out the back of her skull. He pulled the blade out of her head and wiped it on his pants. "She had it comin'," he said with a sigh. Rylee just simply said, "Well."

Rick and the others, except Jacqui, Andrea, and Dale rushed out of the underground area of the C.D.C. T-Dog ran to the front entrance and tried to open it, but the doors wouldn't budge. He ran over to the key pad and pressed every button on it, but nothing happened. "Daryl," Rick called. Daryl tossed him one of the axes he was carrying and they swung at the windows of the C.D.C. with every bit of strength they had. "This is no use!" Rick backed away from the window, but Daryl continued to swing at the window, leaving nothing but scratches. "Daryl, look out!" It was T-Dog running towards the glass with a chair. Daryl jumped out of the way and T-Dog charged. But like the axes, the chair was no use. Shane, standing off to the side, loaded his gun quickly.

They didn't have much time at all. Only minutes. If they didn't get that glass busted, they would be consumed in flames. "Ya'll get down! Get down," Shane called, and everyone ducked. He cocked his gun and walked over to the window. Lifting his gun, he shot at it twice. Nothing. "The glass won't break?" Carol's daughter, Sophia asked. But then Carol got up, digging through her purse. "Rick. I have something that might help." He looked over to her as she approached. "Carol, I don't think a nail file's gonna do it," Shane told her, but she ignored him still digging in her bag. "Your first morning at camp," she told Rick, "When I washed your uniform, I found this in your

pocket." She held out the grenade-like weapon that Rick had gotten out of the tank in the streets of Atlanta. Rick grabbed it from her, then headed back to the windows. Everybody immediately started getting down on the ground. He knelt down next to the glass and pulled the clip off. After placing it on the ground, he bolted towards the others and it went off. A loud explosion sounded and the ground vibrated along with the sound of glass shattering. Everyone looked up and saw the window was broken. "Come on!" They all rushed to it, and each one jumped out onto the ground, but the loud noise must've attracted walkers. Rick and Shane were both aiming and firing, clearing out a way for the others. Then Daryl headed for one and swung the ax in his hand, slicing its head off. There were just a couple more gun fires before everyone jumped into the vehicles.

Rick started to crank the engine to the engine to the RV when Lori pointed and yelled, "Wait, wait, wait! They're coming." He looked up to see Andrea and Dale climb hop down from where the window used to be. Everyone watched them as they ran across the grass. Rick looked down at his watch, breathing heavily. He looked back up and blew the horn a couple times. Lori stuck her head out of the window, waved her arm and yelled, "Get down!" Everyone in the RV climbed to the back and the others got down in their vehicles as Andrea and Dale jumped down behind a barrier. Then it happened. There was suddenly a loud explosion, then the C.D.C. building began to crumble apart and be engulfed by flames. It was so loud and felt just like an earthquake. Everyone raised up, staring in awe as what was left of the building now fell to the ground.

Dale looked over at Andrea, then leaned down to help her up. "Come on," he said. The two got up and headed to the RV as Glen swung the door open. "Get in!" They quickly rushed to it, and climbed in then sat down at the table. After a moment of everyone catching their breath and exchanging relieved expressions, Rick started the engine to the RV and made a U-turn, then began to drive away, and the others followed.

The ground lightly shook under Rylee and Dean's feet as they looked through cabinets and drawers in the nurse's office. "Woah." Dean turned to Rylee. "Did you hear that?" "What the hell was that?" she asked him. He stood there for a second before answering. "I don't know. I think it was an explosion." He looked down, but then looked back up and an expression of panic spread across Dean's face. "We have to go. Now." He quickly zipped up his backpack and put it on his shoulders, then tossed Rylee hers. "What? Why?" she asked him. He looked at her. "That explosion is gonna attract every deadly outside of Atlanta. They're gonna be passin' by this way, comin' from all over. We need to leave before they get here and we gotta get back to Sammy." Rylee threw her backpack onto her shoulders, then loaded her rifle. "That means we'll have to deal with some on the way." Dean just nodded.

They both ran out of the nurse's office and down the hallway. Dean looked back as he heard growling from behind him. Deadlies were coming around the corner towards the back of the hallway and he looked at Rylee. "We gotta haul ass!" Rylee looked back and saw them, then sped up faster. Once they made it to the front office doors, there were deadlies falling down the main staircase. Rylee aimed her gun, but Dean pushed it down. "We can't worry about them! We have to get out of here!" They turned and ran into the office, letting the doors close behind them. Rylee faced the inside of the school,

backing away slowly from the door as the deadlies gnashed their teeth against the glass. She gasped when she backed into Dean, who was facing the other way. "Hey, what are youâ€¦" she trailed off when she turned around and looked out the front doors and saw them covering the school lawn. "Howâ€¦how did it happen that fast?" Dean asked. "Iâ€¦I don't know."

2. Season 2: Chapter 2

Dean and Rylee stood back to back in the center of the office. "We're gonna have to make a run for it," Dean said in a low voice. "What?" Rylee said. "Are you crazy?" "No, I'm desperate. There's no way that we can kill all of 'em without bein' ambushed. It's our only chance. We can out run 'em, but we're gonna have to find a place to hide when we get outta breath." Rylee inhaled deeply, then slowly let it out. Suddenly, Dean ran for the front entrance. "Come on!" he called, and Rylee headed over. "This is insane," she told him as he opened the doors.

As soon as the doors came open, they both bolted in the direction their camp was. The growls were coming from all around them. Some were close, some were far. But neither one of them stopped nor even looked back. They just kept running. And it seemed like they were running forever. But eventually they couldn't hear the growls anymore and they were deep in the woods. They stopped for a second to catch their breath. "We can't stand here for long. There's gonna be more," Dean said. Rylee looked at him and said, "We can't just keep running like this. They're gonna catch up eventually." "I know," Dean replied. "That's why I said we can't stand her for long."

The two eventually made it back to their camp after dark, and headed inside the shed everyone slept in. Dean was leaned over Samantha. "Sammy? Can you hear me?" She didn't respond. Just let out quiet, almost silent groans. "Just hold on. I'm gonna see if I got anything that's gonna help you. Jameson, look through my bag and see what I got." "Do you not know what all you have?" he asked. "No," Rylee interrupted. "We had to get out. There was an explosion somewhere in Atlanta. Deadlies surrounded the school. We had to get out of there." Jameson just nodded, then started going through Dean's bag. "Most I see here is useless. Ah, wait a second." He pulled out a bottle from the bag and opened it. "The Tylenol might bring down her fever." He went to give the pills to Samantha, but Rylee turned to Dean. "Can I talk to you?" Jameson looked up for a moment, but then turned back to Samantha.

Rylee headed out the door, still holding her rifle, and was followed by Dean. She turned to him as soon as he stepped onto the grass. "She's not gonna make it. Do you really think some Tylenol is gonna help a deadly bite?" "No," Dean answered softly as Rylee paced back and forth. "We either gotta shoot her or leave her. Those things will be here any minute. Now, we've got to go." Dean shushed her. "Keep your voice down. He's gonna hear you." Rylee just scoffed and continued to pace back and forth. Samantha was Jameson's wife. She was bitten just a few hours ago, right before Dean and Rylee left. Dean had decided to go on this suicide mission just to keep Jameson hopeful. When in reality, they all know there's no hope for Sammy. But her husband is trying to do anything he can. "We can't sit here and watch her turn then let her get after one of us. She has to die, Dean. She is going to anyway. We can't let one bite take us all

down." He was silent. He didn't say anything to her. Hell, what could he say? She was right and he knew it. The hard part was telling that to Jameson. "I'll go talk to him," Dean finally said. "Stay out here and keep watch. If you see anything, come tell us." Rylee nodded and Dean turned and headed back inside.

He made his way back over to Samantha's husband and stood beside him. "James, you've got a decision to make." He sat there, brushing her hair out of her face. "And what's that?" he asked. Dean sighed and looked down. "You know what it is." Dean found this somewhat difficult. He's had to do harder things, but it was just the fact that he was making a man choose to either leave his wife for dead or kill her. "I can't make that decision," he simply told him. Dean folded his arms. "Those things are gonna be here. I don't know when, but it'll be soon. We can't drag her around. It's a wonder she hasn't turned yet." "I'm not leaving her," he snapped. There was an awkward silence there for a moment, but Dean finally said, "If you don't leave her, then we'll have no choice but to leave you. I'm sorry." "Dean!" Rylee called from outside. "They're coming!" Dean cursed under his breath and looked out the window. Sure enough, a pack of deadlies was stumbling out of the woods. He turned around to grab his and Rylee's bags, when he heard Rylee start unloading gun shots. "What's it gonna be, James?" he asked as he backed towards the door. "Leave me here," he called to him. Dean didn't want to. He couldn't leave him. But he knew he had to. There was no time to argue. "I wish there was another way. I'm sorry." He picked up his rifle and headed out the door where Rylee was. "Where's the wheels?" Rylee asked. "Out back. Let's go!" The two hurried around the shed where Dean's red four-wheeler was. He reached into his pocket, pulling out the keys and hopping on. Rylee hopped on the back and the two drove off, leaving Jameson and his wife for dead.

They drove through the woods and made it onto a road. They drove for a few silent hours. "There's a highway a few good miles up ahead. There's a lot of broken down cars. I'm sure we can find some supplies there," Dean told Rylee. She didn't respond. She was too busy thinking about Jameson and Samantha. It wasn't supposed to end that way, but it did. "Do you think they made it out?" she asked Dean. "Honestly?" he asked. "No. I don't." There was another silent moment before she replied. "I don't either." "He had a gun. It's possible he killed some, made his way out." No. There's no way. There were too many for the two themselves to handle. "Maybe," Rylee mumbled to herself.

Dale drove the RV with Daryl ahead on his motorcycle. "Oh, geez," he sighed. He slowly pulled it to a stop. There were too many cars on the highway to get through. Daryl drove a head a little, but then turned around and pulled up next to Dale. "You see a way through?" he asked him. Daryl looked back, then jerked his head back that direction and turned around, leading Dale through the mess of vehicles. "Eh, maybe we should just go back," Glen said. "There's an interstate bypass-" "We can't spare the fuel," Dale interrupted. They really couldn't. They were running low, and going back was no option. It would be too dangerous.

The rest in the RV watched as Dale maneuvered through the cars, followed by Rick, his family, Carol, and her daughter in the other car. The scene was just eerie. There were cars with their doors all open, sitting on the side of the road. Some were flipped over. Some had bodies in them. "Geez," Glen said to himself, looking around. And

it was obvious the others were thinking the same thing. "Sure we can get through here?" he asked Dale. But then suddenly, there was a loud noise that came from the hood of the RV and smoke started pouring out. It gave off a high-pitched scratching sound and Dale turned the engine off. Rick stopped his car behind him, then got out, followed by his wife, Lori. Dale pushed the door open and stepped out onto the highway. "I said it. Didn't I say it? A thousand times. Dead in the water." "Problem, Dale?" Shane asked as he followed him to the front of the RV. "Well, this is the small matter of being stuck in the middle of nowhere with no hope ofâ€¦" He trailed off when he looked around at all the cars meanwhile Daryl walked around to the back of a car and started digging through the trunk. "Okay, that was dumb." "Can't find a radiator hose here," Daryl explained, "but there's a whole bunch of stuff we can find."

"Siphon more fuel from these cars for a start," T-Dog suggested.

"Maybe some water?" Carol asked.

"Food?" Glen added.

"This is a graveyard," Lori interrupted, causing everyone to turn and look at her. Then they all exchanged looks. "I don't know how I feel about this." Daryl turned and went back to digging through the junk in the back of the car. "Come on, ya'll. Let's look around," T-Dog said as he walked away. Lori took Carl's hand and they went to do what T-Dog suggested. They walked up to one car that had a stench coming from the inside. Lori leaned down to look in and discover a body sitting in the passenger seat, surrounded by flies. Carol appeared by her side and looked in, then turned to the children. "Kids, don't look."

Back over at the RV, Dale had the front open and Glen stepped up with two screwdrivers. "Okay. Which one?" he asked. "The flathead," Dale answered. "The radiator hose clamp is always a flathead." He then looked back to Glen and handed him back the screwdriver. "Here. You do it. Learn something." Then Dale walked away and Glen went to work.

Carol had found herself going through a suitcase full of clothes. She looked down and picked up a red blouse, then held it against her, trying to imagine how it would look on her. She smiled to herself, but then looked up to see Lori watching her. Lori turned away, but Carol said to her, "Ed never let me wear nice things like this." She started to pull the suitcase out. "Gonna need clothes." Lori walked over to the same car and turned to her son. "Hey, Carl." He turned around and looked at her. "Always within my sight, okay?" He nodded. "You too, Sophia," Carol told her daughter.

Rick, who was carrying around a gun, looked up at Dale, who was now on top of the RV looking around with a pair of binoculars. "It's good," he told Rick. After he had walked away and everyone went back to looking, Dale continued to keep a look out. He then noticed something off in the distance. He went to look through his binoculars again and Rick noticed. He raised his gun and looked through the scope. After moving it around, he saw what Dale was looking at. A walker. But it wasn't just the one. Another one came walking around a large truck. Suddenly, a whole group came around the truck. "Oh, Christ," Rick said to himself.

Dean and Riley were back on the road again. It's been a while since they ate. They were tired, hungry, and thirsty. Rylee was losing hope of ever finding this highway that Dean told her about. "How far are we?" she asked. "Not sure," Dean answered. He looked around and saw that they were coming up on a bunch of cars scattered all over the road. "Wait a second," Dean said. "I think we're on it." Rylee sighed in relief. "Thank god." Dean stopped the four-wheeler and turned it off. The two hopped up and looked around. "Damn. Where to start?" Rylee asked.

They started walking and looking around. The cars were filled with all kinds of things from clothes to books, toys to jewelry. But they just couldn't ignore the stench coming from some of the cars. Rylee leaned down and looked into one and gagged at the scent. She covered her nose and mouth. "I think there might be something dead in your car, sir," she said to the corpse sitting in the front seat. "Oh, yeah. I should warn you. These people been dead a while." "Okay, smart ass," she said back to Dean. They continued looking around until Rylee noticed something. There was movement a little ways ahead of her. "Hey," she said, and her partner looked over. She pointed to it, and realized it was a person. No. Wait. It wasn't a person. No—it was one of those things. And there were more. "Get down," Dean whispered. She did as she was told and he quickly made his way over to her. They both knelt down next to a truck. "Get under it," he instructed her. "What? I'm not doing that." "Just do it, Rylee." She quickly got down and rolled under the truck and Dean did the same. The growls from the undead were approaching, but Rylee noticed something else. "You see that RV over there?" she asked in a whisper. "What about it?" Rylee looked on more time, but she was certain she saw someone. "There's someone on top of it." Dean guided his eyes to what Rylee was looking at. "Yeah. I think I see him." He then slowly crawled out from under the RV and moved forward. "Wait. Where the hell are you going?" Rylee decided she had no choice but to follow him. "Just stay low and you'll be fine."

They stayed on the outer side of the road and headed toward the RV they were looking at. Dean observed carefully and spotted another person and pointed. "There. There's someone else. See that black guy over there?" Rylee nodded and they both watched him. The guy crept over to a car and hid behind it. But as he knelt down, he somehow cut a deep gash in his arm, because they both saw blood squirting. She cringed at it, even though she's seen worse. He got up and ran behind some cars, causing Dean and Rylee to lose track of him. "Where'd he go?" Rylee asked. The two moved forward a little more and spotted him. They could only see his feet, but they found him hiding behind another car. Rylee wasn't sure what to do. Should they help him? Or should they look for any more people? Or should they just get out of there? The deadlies hadn't seen them yet. They should probably get away while they can. But Dean was still looking around. "I see more people. They're under those cars over there." He was right. There were more people. "It's weird. We haven't seen life since Jameson and Samantha." They both turned their attention back to the guy they were watching. He started moving again, and was stumbling everywhere. The blood coming from his arm was leaving a trail. They watched him as he fell back against a car and a deadly head straight for him. Dean raised his gun and aimed, but Rylee stopped him. "You can't. Every one of those things will be after us. There's nothing we can do." Turning back to him, Rylee saw another guy appear behind a vehicle. This one was white with short brown hair. His face was dirty

and sweaty. He bolted up, throwing his crossbow onto the hood of a car and attacking the deadly, shoving a knife into the back of its head. He then took the corpse and threw it on top of the black guy. After doing so, he dragged one out of a car and pulled it on top of himself. "That's pretty smart," Dean mumbled. They watched as the things walked on by, not stopping for one second. Once they were all gone, the white guy in the leather vest pushed the dead body off of him, then went over to the other one and did the same and helped him up. But their attention directed elsewhere when they heard what sounded like a little girl. "There," Dean pointed. The deadlies were reaching under a car where a little girl was hiding. She scooted her way over to the other side, then got up and headed into the woods. A man emerged from one of the cars and went after her.

Once they were both gone, the people started getting up off the ground. "We should go," Dean said. There was a sudden zooming sound right next to Rylee's ear. They both ducked and she looked over. "It's an arrow. That asshole shot at me." "Is it a walker?" someone asked. "No," the one with the crossbow answered. "It's hiding. Walkers don't hide."

3. Season 2: Chapter 3

Dean and Rylee stayed low while the one with the crossbow slowly made his way towards them. "What do we do?" Dean asked Rylee, since she was quick to come up with ideas. But when he looked over, she wasn't there. "Rylee?" He looked for a moment, then shook his head and looked back to the guy in the leather vest. "Daryl, you see anything?" someone called. But the guy, Daryl, didn't respond. He looked around a car, then turned and looked the other way. Suddenly Rylee appeared behind him. "Oh no. She's gonna get herself killed." Dean watched as Rylee kicked him hard in the back of the knee, sending him down on his knees and his crossbow fell to the ground. "You better watch where you aim that thing," she spat as she aimed the gun at him. "What the hell? You're a damn girl," Daryl exclaimed as he turned to look at her. "Yeah, I'm a damn girl that's about to stomp your ass. That arrow missed me by an eyelash. What the hell where you thinking?" Daryl turned and looked at her again. "Thought you might've been one of them nasty-lookin' things. Guess I was right." Rylee's face scrunched up with anger and she kneed Daryl in the back, earning a grunt of pain from him. Dean stood up and headed towards them, but then he saw the rest of Daryl's people walk up behind them and one of them had a gun, so he stopped in his tracks. Dean immediately put his hands up. "Woah, hold on now. We ain't lookin' for trouble. We were just leaving." "The hell we are," Rylee said. Dean glared at her. "Put the gun down, damnit. You're about to get yourself killed." He then turned back to the others. "We ain't lookin' to hurt nobody. She's just a bit of a hot head. We didn't know anyone would be here, just lookin' for supplies," he explained. "Where'd you come from?" the man with the gun asked. "Don't worry about that. Get this crazy bitch off of me," Daryl demanded. Rylee pointed the gun at his head. "What was that?" "Rylee," Dean scolded. She looked over at him. "Put the gun down. Now." Rylee hesitated for a moment, then lowered her gun and walked back over to Dean. "He hurts one of us, it's on you," she said as she stood beside him. Daryl leaned down, grabbed his crossbow, and then turned to the one with the gun. "Shane, you take care of 'em. I'm going back over here, watch for Rick and Sophia." And with that, Daryl was gone. But the one Daryl called Shane, lowered his gun. "Now. Where'd ya'll come

from?" he asked. "We were living in an abandoned shed outside of Atlanta," Dean started. "There were two more of us, butâ€¦well, I'm sure you can guess what happened. There was an explosion somewhere in the city and it attracted the deadlies. We had to get a move on. Our camp was taken over by 'em. We've been out of food and water for a while." Shane looked at them for a moment, then looked to an old man standing off to the side. "Either one of you bit?" he asked as he looked back. "No," Rylee answered. "You can check us if you want, I don't care. We ain't bit." "My apologies," Dean interrupted. "Rylee here has a bit of an attitude problem." Shane smiled and laughed. "Yeah, Daryl, the one she almost shotâ€¦he gets a little fired up every now and then." Dean looked down. "So, Rylee, huh? And your name is?" Shane asked. "Dean," he simply answered. "Okay, Dean," Shane said. "You can come on back with us to the RV. But you try anything stupid, I'll have to put a hole in your head." "Fair enough," he replied.

They had gone back to the RV and were given food and water. After Rylee finished, she thanked them and headed out to where Daryl was, meanwhile Dean discussed with the others. She looked around, then saw him sitting on the rail next to the road, staring off into the woods. Rylee slowly walked over to him, then sat on the rail next to him. Daryl looked over at her with a confused look. "Hey, uhâ€¦about what happened over thereâ€¦I apologize." He raised an eyebrow at her. "You were just protectin' your people. You kinda had a right to shoot at me," she told him. "Well, I thought ya were a walker at first. But then I seen ya duck." Rylee looked out into the woods. "You're a pretty good shot with that thing." He scoffed. "It's been a while since I've missed my target. Yer lucky I was a lil' bit shook from that horde o' geeks," he said, then turned to her. "Else I woulda killed ya." Rylee laughed quietly, looking through the trees. "Who was that little girl?" she asked. "Dean and I watched the whole thing go down." Daryl sighed. "Carol's girl. Rick went after 'er, though. He'll bring 'er back." "What makes you so sure of that?" Rylee asked him. He gave her a harsh look. "Well, ya seen him follow 'er out there, didn't ya?" he asked as he pointed out to the woods. She didn't respond.

It wasn't long before Rick came back. Alone. Obviously, he wanted to know why Dean and Rylee were there. Shane explained everything, and then a few guys from the group, Dean, and Rylee went out into the woods to look for Sophia. "Ya sure this is the spot?" Daryl asked as he knelt down beside the creek bank where Rick claimed to have left her. He had told Sophia to hide there as he led the walkers away. When he went back, she wasn't there. "I left her right here," he replied then pointed up the creek. "I drew the walkers away in that direction up the creek." "Without a paddle," Daryl mumbled. "Seems where we've landed." "She was gone by the time I got back here. I figured she'd just took off and headed back to the group." He pointed off into a different direction. "I told her to go back that way and keep the sun on her left shoulder." Daryl walked over to the bank in the direction Rick pointed, which was where Glen was standing. "Hey, show 'round. Why don't ya step off to one side? Yer muckin' up tha trail." Glen did as he was told. "Assumin' she knows her left from her right," Shane mumbled to himself. "He's got a point," Rylee said in a low voice to Dean. "She's just a kid." Rick replied to Shane, "Shane, she understood me fine." Shane spoke back to him. "The kid's tired and scared, man. She had a close call with two walkers. Kinda wonder how much you said stuck." Rylee sighed and folded her arms. She just wanted to get back to the highway, get supplies, and leave.

She didn't want any part of this goose chase. "Got clear prints right here," Daryl interrupted and everyone turned to him. "She did like ya said, headed back to tha highway." Rick walked over and Daryl started to climb up on the bank. "Alright, spread out," he said. Rylee turned to Dean. "Us too?" she asked. Dean looked around at everyone then turned back to Rylee. "I suppose so. They helped us out, now we should help them."

Daryl led the way as Glen, Shane, Rick, Rylee, and Dean followed. But Daryl came to a halt and got down on one knee, looking at the ground. While the others were distracted, Rylee grabbed Dean's arm and pulled him aside. "Let's just leave. This girl ain't our problem." Dean looked down, then back at her. "Rylee, she's just a kid. We gotta find her. She's alone somewhere out here. Her momma's back at the highway waitin' for her to come back out these woods." She didn't respond right away, just sighed. "Alright," she said softly, giving up on the discussion. "She ran off that way," Daryl said, pointing off to the right of them. "Why would she do that?" Glen asked. "Maybe she saw somethin'? Spooked 'er? Maybe run off?" Shane suggested. "A walker?" Glen asked. "What else?" Rylee asked Glen sarcastically. Dean mumbled to her, "Shut up." Daryl shook his head. "I don't see any other footprints. Jus' hers." There was a split second of silence until Shane broke it. "So, what do we do?" Dean and Rylee looked at each other, but Rick spoke up. "No, better if you and Glen go back up to the highway. People are gonna start panicking." Shane stood and looked at Rick. "Let 'em know we're on her trail doin' everything we can, but most of all, keep everybody calm." Dean turned to Rylee. "You go on, too. I'll stay and help Rick and Daryl." Rylee raised an eyebrow. "Really? You're gonna send me back? In case you didn't know, I'm not very good at comforting people." Dean thought for a second. "Good point. You stay. I'll go."

Glen and Shane started heading back, followed by Dean. Daryl started walking, but then looked back to see Rylee just standing there. "Ya comin'?" he asked. She sighed and moved forward behind Rick.

Dean looked over and saw Carol standing next to the road, staring off into the woods. He felt a pang of pity hit him right in the chest and made his way over to her. "Your little girl's gonna be alright." She didn't move. Just stood there. "Y'know, I taught Rylee how to hunt and track myself. They'll bring her back." "Daryl's good at it too," she said with a smile, but it quickly faded. Dean noticed and the feel of pity grew stronger. He has always been sympathetic. Sometimes, he knew how to be a little harsh, but it was only with certain people. Comforting people was something he was good at. Sometimes. "Well, with two of 'em out there, plus Rick, there's no way she's gonna get away from 'em," he said as he smiled at her. Once again, he gained no reaction from her. He decided to leave her be. "Let me know if there's anything I can do," he said as he patted her on the shoulder and walked away.

After he left, Carol turned and looked over at Dale, who was in front of the RV. She looked back at the woods one last time, then made her way over to him. "Why aren't we all out there looking? Why are we moving cars?" she asked. "We'll have to clear enough room so I can get the RV turned around as soon as it's running," Dale answered. "Now that we have fuel, we can go back to a bypass that Glen found on a map." "Goin' back's gonna be easier then tryna get through this mess," Shane said as he walked up. "We're not going anywhere until my daughter gets back," Carol said back. Dean looked up from a car he

had started going through after hearing Carol make that statement. He watched as she made her way back over to the side of the road as the others talked amongst themselves. "Okay. Come on, people. We still got a lot to do," Shane said. "Let's stay on it. Come on."

Back in the woods, Daryl, Rick, and Rylee were still looking for Sophia. Rylee walked next to Daryl as Rick followed, but they stopped. "The tracks are gone," Rick said. "Nah, they're faint," Daryl corrected. "They ain't gone. She came through here." Rylee made sure to keep a look out for any, what they called, walkers. There was no telling when they would be caught up in tracking this girl and they come at them. "How can you tell?" Rick asked. "I don't see anythingâ€¦|dirtâ€¦|grass." "Trust him. It's there," Rylee said. They walked further a little bit but Daryl asked Rylee, without looking away from the ground, "What are you doin' out here anyway?" There was a hint of harshness in his voice. She could tell he didn't like her very much. Or maybe it was just that he didn't trust her. "I just wanna get that little girl back to her momma. I know that I don't know her or anything, but I don't really like the idea of her being out here alone." Rick looked back at her. "Well, we appreciate the help," he said. Rylee nodded.

There was suddenly a noise. It sounded like something rustled in the bushes and everyone immediately got down and aimed their weapons. "What the hell was that?" Rylee asked. "Not sure," Daryl answered. Him and Rick exchanged looks and slowly crept towards the noise and stopped again. They all looked and saw what appeared to be a human. But it wasn't a person. It was a walker. Rick looked at Rylee, then to Daryl. He motioned Rick to go forward and that he was going to the right. He turned to Rylee, pointed at her, and then pointed straight down. She got the message. Stay put. She just rolled her eyes and watched the two go off into different directions. Stay put? Really? For a moment there, she was angry. But then she realized that it didn't really take three people to take down one walker. Rick ran off down the hill and stopped in front of it. He whistled, getting its attention and it growled loudly. But there was a sudden silence as an arrow went straight through its. Daryl really was a good shot at that thing.

The three made their way over to the walker. Daryl pulled his arrow out of its head. "Good work, hot shot," Rylee said with a smirk. He replied with a scoff. He looked around and called out for Sophia, but as expected from Rylee, there was no reply. Rick knelt down, pulling a pair of gloves out of his pocket and putting them on. Rylee watched curiously, not knowing what they were about to do. Daryl, too, noticed this. "What're ya lookin' for?" "Skin. Under the nails," Rick replied. He flipped it over and looked into its mouth. "It fed recently." Oh no, Rylee thought to herself. Please not the girl. "There's flesh caught in its teeth," Rick said, pulling something out of its mouth. "Yeah, what kinda flesh?" Daryl asked. "Only one way to know for sure," Rick said, then ripped the walker's shirt open and took out his knife. "Woah, woah. What are you about to do?" They both ignored her. "I'll do it," Daryl said, hovering over the corpse and taking out his knife, which was larger than Rick's. He held the knife above its stomach, ready to stab. "Wait, you're cuttin' that thing open?" Rylee asked. Rick looked at her and replied, "We have no choice." And that's when Daryl's knife stabbed into it. Just the sound alone was enough to make Rylee cringe. She held her hand in front of her nose and mouth as an odor escaped from inside the body. Daryl dug his knife down the walker's abdomen then stabbed it again.

Rylee turned away, feeling nauseous. "What's the matter?" Daryl teased. "Weak stomach?" He chuckled then went back to work. "Now's the bad part," he said to Rick. "You mean that wasn't the bad part?" Rylee asked in disgust. Daryl chuckled again. "The show ain't over, darlin'." He then began feeling around inside the corpse laying before him. The insides of the body were a sickly dark green, almost black. And the more Daryl dug around in it, the stronger the scent. She turned around, gagging and grabbing her stomach. But nothing came up. When she turned back around, Daryl had its stomach sitting on the ground. Rick then took his knife and cut it open. He scooped up some of the contents on his knife, then slung them on the ground. Daryl stuff his knife into the pouch and brought it back up. Something was sticking on the end that looked like the skull of a small animal. Rylee sighed in relief. "A woodchuck," she said. Daryl stood and Rick looked up at him. "At least we know," he said. "At least we know," he said in agreement as he picked his crossbow up. "Yeah. At least," Rylee repeated, still feeling nauseous.

4. Season 2: Chapter 4

The sun was just going down when Rick and the other two came out of the woods. "They're back," Rylee heard Glen say as they walked up to the pavement. Dean made his way over and exchanged looks with Rylee, noticing there were only three people instead of four. "You didn't find her," Carol said in a panicked matter. "Her trail went cold," Rick explained. "We'll pick it up again at first light." Carol began to cry. "We can't leave my daughter out there all alone, to spend the night all alone in the woods." "Huntin' in tha dark's no good," Daryl told her. "Jus' be trippin' over ourselves. More people would get lost." Rylee stepped over the rail and made her way over to her partner, standing next to him. "She's twelve, she can't be out there on her own. You didn't find anything?" Carol asked, tears building in her eyes. Rylee looked at Dean and he was looking down. She always thought he could somehow feel certain people's emotions. For most, it didn't affect him. But others, it was like he could feel their pain. "Now, I know this is hard, but I'm asking you not to panic. We know she was out there." "And we tracked her for a while," Daryl spoke up. "We did. We did the best we could, Carol," Rylee added. Rick spoke to everyone, "We need to make this an organized effort. Daryl knows the woods better than anybody. I've asked him to oversee this." Then Carol looked down at Daryl's clothes, noticing the blood on him. "Is thatâ€¦is that blood?" Daryl looked down and it appeared he had forgotten all about it. It seemed she started to panic even more because her breathing got heavier. "We took down a walker," Rick explained. "A walker. Oh my god," Carol breathed out. Rick was trying his best to calm her. "There was no sign that it was anywhere near Sophia." "How can you know that?" Andrea asked him. Rick and Rylee both turned to Daryl. He hesitated for a moment before answering. "Cut the son of bitch open. Made sure." Dean then looked at Rylee with an eyebrow raised. "He did," she simply said, followed by a cringe as the image flashed in her head. A disgusted look spread across his face. Carol then sat down on the rail and Lori sat next to her. She looked up at Rick. "How could youâ€¦just leave her out thereâ€¦to begin with?" she asked between breaths. "How could you just leave her?" Rick's facial expression changed. "Those two walkers were on us. I-I had to draw 'em off., it was her best chance."

Dean and Rylee turned to walk away. They stepped over by a car and Dean leaned up against it. "Poor woman," he mumbled. Then he looked

at Rylee. "Did Daryl really cut that thing open?" Rylee nodded. "He sure as hell did." "Tch. I'm glad you stayed instead of me." Rylee looked up at the evening sky and watched the orange and pink clouds float overhead. She then thought back to the woods, and how Daryl acted around her. "I don't think Daryl trusts us. He seems kinda bothered by us bein' here" she said low. Dean sighed. "Well, we are a couple strangers. I wouldn't trust us either. Plus, he doesn't exactly seem like the welcomin' type." Then a big grin spread across his face and he elbowed her. "Maybe he likes you." This caused Rylee to roll her eyes and fold her arms. "Oh, please. The bastard shot an arrow at me." "Yeah, but he thought you were a deadly." She could feel Dean's eyes on her and she could sense that stupid grin he still had on his face. "You like him, don't you?" "Yes, that's exactly why I aimed a gun at his head," she said sarcastically and punched Dean in the arm. "Ow! Damn. Y'know, you hit like a man." Then she herself grinned. "Yeah, and I'll stomp your ass like one, too." They both fell silent and looked over at Carol, which caused their smiles to quickly disappear. "Manâ€¦shame on us. We're over here jokin' 'round and that poor woman over there's jus' broken." Rylee looked down as she was showered with guilt. Dean was right. It wasn't the time to joke around. She looked over at Daryl, who was looking at Sophia's mother. She could tell he felt bad about not bringing Sophia back. Hell, she did too and she didn't even know these people. And now there she was, joking around with Dean like some immature kid. "My little girl got left in the woods," Carol choked out. No one said anything, just stood there.

It was early the next day when they all got up. Everyone gathered around and Rick spread out a set of sharp tools on the hood of the car they were standing around. "Everybody takes a weapon." He backed away from them. "These aren't exactly the kind of weapons we need," Andrea stated with a hand on her hip. "What about the guns?" "We been over that," Shane called from over at the RV. "Dale, Rick, and I are carryin' 'em. Can't have people poppin' off rounds every time a tree rustles." "It's not the trees I'm worried about," Andrea retorted. Shane responded immediately. "Say somebody fires at the wrong moment, herd happens to be passin' by. See, then it's game over for all of us. So, you need to get over it," he said as he threw his bag over his shoulder. "He's right," Dean said. "We can't have any gun fire. They we'll be in trouble." As soon as Dean finished his sentence, Daryl announced, "The idea is to take the creek up 'bout five miles, turn 'round, and come back down tha other side. Chances are she'll be by tha creek. It's her only landmark." "Stay quiet, stay sharp," Rick added. "Keep space between you, but always stay within sight of each other." "Everybody assemble your packs," Shane called out. Rick turned and walked over to the RV. "Dale, get on those repairs. We gotta get this RV ready to move." Dale stood. "I don't wanna stay here a minute longer than we have to. Good luck out there. Bring Sophia back." Rick nodded, then patted his son on the shoulder. "Keep an eye on Carl while we're gone?"

Dean and Rylee were off to the side, getting their bags ready. They already had some of their own supplies, and didn't feel the need to take any from Rick's group. "Alright, now look," Dean said. "You stay close to either me or Daryl. Can't have you wonderin' off." "I know what I'm doin', I'm not a child. This isn't the first time I've had to look for someone," she said with a hint of attitude. "Alright," was all Dean said to that. Rylee heard Dale say something to someone about not putting him in a position. She tried not to eavesdrop on his conversation, but they were right there. She wasn't really paying

attention at first so she didn't know who he was talking to. "I'm not going out there without my gun." It was Andrea. She then heard Dean snort at the sound of her voice. Rylee guessed he didn't like her very much. "I'll even say please." "I'm doing this for you." Dale said. "No, you're doing this for yourself. You need to stop." Dean and Rylee looked at each other, then went back to arranging their bags, pretending like they were minding their own business. "What do you think's gonna happen? I'm gonna stick it in my mouth and pull the trigger the moment you hand it to me?" The atmosphere changed, and Rylee could tell Dean was uncomfortable. She was sort of feeling that way herself. But she then noticed that everyone else was listening to their discussion. "I know you're angry at me," Dale said. "That much is clear. But if I hadn't done what I did, you'd be dead now." Andrea almost cut him off, but he managed to finish his sentence before she spoke. "Jenner gave us an option, and I chose to stay."

"You chose suicide."

"So? What's that to you? You barely know me."

"I know Amy's death devastated you."

"Keep her out of this. This is not about Amy, this is about us." Dean had stopped doing what he was doing and was just standing there. He seemed lost, like he didn't really know what to do. Rylee looked back down at her bag, doing the same. Then Andrea added to her previous statement. "And if I had decided I had nothing left to live for, who the hell are you to tell me otherwise, to force my hand like that?" Her voice cracked a little, like she was about to cry. "I saved your life," Dale said softly. "No, Dale. I saved yours. You forced that on me. I didn't want your blood on my hands and that is the only reason I left that building." Building? What building. Rylee decided to try to ignore them. She didn't want to listen anymore and neither did Dean. But she began listening again. "I wanted to die my way. Not ripped apart by some drooling freaks. That was my choice. You took that away from me, Dale." "Come on," Dean said softly. "Let's go over here." It seemed he'd had enough of that. She couldn't really blame him. Dean had been at that point one time, and Rylee assumed that it was reminding him of it. They made their way past the RV and went a few cars down. "I couldn't listen to that anymore." "I know," Rylee mumbled. They stood there in an awkward silence for a few moments until they saw Andrea walk away from Dale. Everyone had turned and headed out towards the woods, so they turned and followed.

Everyone walked in a line, led by Daryl and the two following behind Rick. They noticed Daryl slow down a little as they came up on a tent. He stopped Rick and pointed, then Rick motioned for everyone to get down. So they all obeyed. "She could be in there," Daryl whispered. "There could be a whole bunch of things in there." "Let's hope it's what we're lookin' for," Rylee whispered back. Daryl raised his crossbow and made his way over to the tent slowly as Rick and Shane followed. Everyone else stayed put and watched. Daryl stopped then pulled his knife out, lowering the crossbow and creeping towards the tent. He leaned down, looking in the tent, careful to not make a noise. He stayed in a sort of fighting stance, but after looking, he turned to Rick and threw his hands up. "Carol," Rick quietly called and motioned her over. She walked over and Rick instructed her to call out softly to Sophia. "Sophia. Sweetie. Are you in there?" No response. Daryl was knelt down, ready to strike in case something other than Sophia lunged out of that tent. "Sophia, it's mommy."

Again. Nothing. "Sophia? We're all here, baby." Daryl reached down and slowly unzipped the tent. There was an extreme amount of tension as he did so. He pulled the tent open, then turned his head away, coughing and covering his nose. After he stepped in, Rick took a peek, but the stench seemed to hit him like a brick wall. "Daryl?" Carol called and he didn't respond. "Daryl?" He stepped out after a few moments. "It ain't her." "What's in there?" someone asked. "Some guy. They were generous enough taâ€|opt it out. Ain't that what ya call it?" he asked as he slung his crossbow over his shoulder.

Everyone suddenly heard what sounded like a large bell. They all looked around. "It's comin' from that direction," Rylee said and they all ran towards it. "What direction?" Shane asked. "It's comin' from that way. I'm pretty sure," Rick answered. "Damn, it's hard to tell out here." They all eventually came up on a white church house, with a small graveyard. "That can't be it. There's no steeple, no bells," Shane noted. Rick ignored him and went to check it out anyway. Dean and Rylee stood outside as the others went in, but as soon as they opened the doors, they heard growling from the inside. There was a lot of shuffling around, but once it got quit, Dean called, "Everyone okay in there?" "Yeah," Rick called back. There was another silent moment, but then the bells sounded again. "Where the fuck is that comin' from?" Rylee groaned. Daryl was the first to rush out, followed by the others. They ran to the side of the building and noticed a speaker hanging off the side of the wall. "Turn that damn thing off," Rylee shouted over the noise and Glen rushed over and did so. Daryl pointed up with his blade. "Timer. It's on a timer." "Yeah, ain't that obvious," Rylee growled. "Aye, watch tha' attitude, princess," Daryl snapped back. Rylee glared at him. "What I need to be doin' is watchin' my ass now 'cause every deadly in those woods is gonna come here now." Daryl shot a glare back. "Well, all that damn hollerin' ain't helpin' us neither." She stepped up to him. "Y'know what? You can shove it! I didn't ask for this to happen. I didn't ask to be here." "Why don't you just shut the hell up? Ain't nobody ask for ya ta be here, so why are ya?" Her face scrunched up. "Don't think just because I'm a girl don't mean I won't smack you straight up stupid!" That's when Rick stepped between them. "Alright! That's enough. This is not the time for arguing. Sophia is missing. We can settle this ridiculousness later, but for now we need to work together to find her." "Yeah, we'll settle 'is later," Daryl snapped. "I look forward to it," she snapped back to him then stormed off in the other direction but Dean followed and grabbed her by the arm. "What the hell was that?" he asked harshly. Rylee folded her arms. "Do I not make a valid point? If we could hear that shit from all the way over there, then there's no tellin' how many deadlies are on their way here right now." Dean gave a frustrated sigh. "Look, just calm down. These people know what they're doin'." And with that, Dean walked away, but Rylee looked over to see Daryl still giving her a death glare. She shot him a bird and he hollered before stepping into the church, "Sit on it n' spin, sweetheart." "Goddamnit," she cursed under her breath.

While Rylee stood outside, Dean went up the steps to the church and went inside. Everyone was silent except for Carol. "Father, forgive me," she said in a soft voice. "I don't deserve your mercy. I've prayed for safe passage from Atlanta and you provided. I prayed for Ed to be punished, for laying his hands on me, and for looking at his own daughter, whatever sickness was growing in his soul. I prayed you'd put a stop to it. Give me a chance to raise her right, help her

not make my mistakes." Her voice cracked and Dean felt the pain in her voice. "She's so fearful," Carol whispered. "She's so young in her way. She hasn't had a chance." She looked up to the statue of Jesus Christ hanging on the cross and Dean turned and walked out. Everyone standing near the door seemed to notice. Rylee looked up, still angry from moments earlier. "We gotta find that little girl. And soon," Dean said. "I agree. We need to get a move on." Dean looked down at the grass and just started walking. Rylee followed and could tell something was bothering him. "What're they doin' in there?" she asked. Dean sighed. "What do people always do when they're in church?" Rylee didn't answer, instead said, "I need to get in there and pray for some patience and tolerance with that asshole." Dean laughed a little. "Yeah, that's be a good idea."

It was a while before everyone stepped back outside. Shane walked up to the group and cleared his throat. "Ya'll gotta follow the creek bed back. Okay Daryl, you're in charge." "Oh, great," Rylee mumbled, earning an elbow to the rib from Dean. "Me and Rick are just gonna hang back, search this area for another hour or so just to be thorough." "Splitin' us up?" Daryl asked. "Ya sure?" Shane sighed. "Yeah, we'll catch up to you." "I'm staying here," Rylee whispered to Dean. "No, you're not. I'm keeping you in my sight." She grunted and rolled her eyes. "I wanna stay too," Carl said. "I'm her friend." Rick and Shane exchanged looks and there was a moment of hesitation before Lori stepped up and said, "Let's be careful, okay?" Her son nodded. "I will." And with that everyone else headed back to the highway.

5. Season 2: Chapter 5

Everyone made their way through the woods, following Daryl. No one was saying a word. Everyone was just so focused on their surroundings, trying to find some sort of lead on Sophia. "So this is it?" Carol asked as she sat on a log. "This is the whole plan?" Daryl mumbled something, but Rylee couldn't quite understand what he said. "Carrying knives and pointy sticks," Andrea said. Then she turned to Lori. "I see you have a gun." "What, you want it?" she asked her in a different tone than usual. "Here. Take it." She held it out to her and waited for her to take it from her hand. "I'm sick of the looks you're givin' me." Andrea gave her a rather surprised look, but took the gun from her after a second of hesitation. Lori then sat down on the same log Carol was sitting on. Rylee just stood there, waiting for someone to say something or for Daryl to tell them to keep going. But then Lori's voice broke the silence. "Honey," she said to Carol, "I can't imagine what you're going through and I would do anything to stop it, but you have got to stop blaming Rick. It is in your face every time you look at him." Carol didn't say anything, just listened to her. "And when Sophia ran, he didn't hesitate, did he? Not for a second. I don't know that any of us would've gone after her the way he did. Or made the hard decisions he had to make. Or that anybody could've done it any differently." Carol just put her head down and Lori looked around at everyone. "Anybody?" No one said a word. She looked down. "Ya'll look to him, then blame him when he's not perfect. You think you can do this without him, go right ahead. Nobody is stoppin' you." And with that, she took a large sip of water from her bottle. Lori looked up when someone reached out to her. It was Andrea, passing Lori's gun back. "We should keep moving." Lori stood, slinging her bag over her shoulder and the others began to follow her lead. Rylee was the second to last person in the line,

followed by Daryl. She didn't feel comfortable for some reason. She felt like he was staring at her. But she pushed the thought to the back of her mindâ€|that is until he made a remark. "Y'know, I'd be a lot nicer if ya wouldn't sway yer hips like 'at." She stopped dead in her tracks then turned around. "Excuse me?" She couldn't believe he said that. Her cheeks burned with embarrassment. Everyone else stopped also. "I think ya heard me righ'." After shooting him a glare for the hundredth time today, she sneered, "Go to hell." She could hear Daryl chuckle behind her as she stormed off to the front of the line and everyone began moving again.

They walked through the woods for a good bit longer. Rylee thought they were never going to make it to the highway. But she didn't really care. She was still embarrassed by Daryl's little remark he made. She didn't realize she walked like that, or maybe Daryl embarrassed her on purpose. But then, there was a loud noise that made her jump slightly. It was a gunshot and worry suddenly struck through her. They ignored it at first, but then Lori stopped and turned around. Andrea turned around also, asking Lori, "You still worrying about it?" "That was a gunshot," Lori responded. "We all heard it," Daryl said. Rylee glared at him. "Well, I didn't think any of us were def." He didn't reply, just gave her a harsh look. Lori looked back to them. "Why one? Why just one gun shot?" Rylee was asking herself that question. "Maybe they took down a walker," Daryl suggested. Rylee despised this man more and more with every word that came out of his mouth, but she didn't say anything to him. "Please don't patronize me. You know Rick wouldn't risk a gunshot to put down one walker. Or Shane. They do it quietly." "Or Dean," Rylee added. "Shouldn't they have caught up with us by now?" Carol asked the others. Daryl sighed. "There's nothin' we can do about it anyway. Can't run around these woods chasin' echoes." Seriously? That was Lori's son and husband out there. And Dean, along with Shane. And Daryl wanted to just brush it off? "So what do we do?" Lori asked him. "Same as we been. Beat the bush for Sophia then work our way back ta tha highway." "No way. What if somethin' happened?" Rylee snapped at Daryl. He turned to her with a raised eyebrow. "We can't do anything righ' now." "But Dean's out there," she said, raising her voice. "Well, I'll tell ya what," he said. "If yer so worried 'bout yer little boyfriend, why don't ya jus' go after 'im then?" She let out a frustrated sigh and gritted her teeth. He was really working her patience. But without saying a word, she followed his lead, as did the others.

But every one stoppedâ€|againâ€|as Andrea said something to Carol. "Sorry for what you're going through. I know how you feel." Carol shrugged. "I suppose you do. Thank you." She then turned to Daryl. "The thought of herâ€|out hereâ€|by herself." She then looked back to Andrea. "It's the not knowing that's killing me. I just keep hopin' and prayin' she doesn't end up like Amy." But then her eyes widened at the realization of what she had just said. "Oh god. That's the worst thing I've ever said." Andrea shook her head. "We're all hoping and praying with you. For what it's worth." They smiled at each other, but the dumbass himself just had to speak up. "I'll tell ya what it's worth: not a damn thing. It's a waste of time, all this hopin' n' prayin'." Rylee gritted her teeth. He had to be joking. "We're gonna locate that little girl, she's gonna be jus' fine." Rylee was surprised. That definitely didn't go as expected. "Am I the only one zen around here? Good lord." She may not have particularly gotten along with Daryl this entire time, but she couldn't help but to admire what he had just done. She realized he really wasn't like

what she thought. He really truly did think they were going to find Sophia. She smiled at Carol, earning a smile back and everyone continued moving.

Dean sat there with Rick and Shane as Hershel operated on Carl. "Why did I let him come with us?" Rick asked Shane. Dean tried to think of somethingâ€¦anything to say that would make Rick feel just a little bit better. But unfortunately, he was at a loss for words. "I should've sent him with Lori." "You know, you start that, and you'll never get that monkey off your back," Shane said. Dean decided that the two needed to be left alone. He stood up. "I'm gonnaâ€¦step out here. Get some air." Neither one of them responded. "Let me know if there's anythin' I can do." Shane nodded and Dean headed out. He sat out on the porch steps and sat his bag on the ground. He unzipped the front pouch, then grabbed a pack of cigarettes. He stuck one in his mouth, lit it, and took a long drag off of it. It sure made him feel a lot better. There was just so much going on: Sophia was missing, Rylee and Daryl were at each other's necks, and now Rick's son has been shot. It seemed like he was a bad luck charm. Or maybe him and Rylee both. He didn't know. All he knew was that they showed up and a bad storm hit this group. After taking another hit off of his cigarette, he wondered if they might have blamed them for this. No. They couldn't. None of this was their fault, so even if any of them did, they didn't have a logical reason. Dean still felt guilty though for some reason. Dean stared at the tree line across the field, waiting for Rylee and the others to come running through when suddenly he heard someone call for Rick, causing him to worry if something was wrong. He quickly put out his cigarette, set it down on the edge of the step, then rushed inside. He could hear Carl's cries from the other room and didn't dare walk in there. "He needs blood," someone said, and Dean could tell it was a female voice. "You. Hold him down," he could hear Hershel say. But then Carl's cries turned into screams. Dean immediately regretted his decision to come inside. He found it difficult to listen to. "Stop, you're killing him!" Rick screamed. "Rick," Hershel shouted, "do you want him to live?" "He needs blood," the female voice said again. But then suddenly, it went quiet in the other room. "He just passed out," Hershel said and Dean sighed to himself in relief. There was a silent second, then Hershel's voice filled the room again. "One downâ€¦five to go."

Later on, when they were finished, Rick continued to give blood for Carl. Shane stood on the other side of the room and Dean stood in the doorway. Hershel promptly took Carl's blood pressure. "Pressure's stable," he said as he placed the stethoscope around his neck. "Lori needs to be here. She doesn't even know what's goin' on. I gotta go find her, bring her back." Hershel turned to him. "You can't do that," he informed Rick. "She's his mother," he seethed. "She needs to know what happened. Her son's lyin' her shot." "And he's going to need more blood." He looked over at Shane. "He can't go more than fifty feet from this bed." Shane nodded. Rick stood, then wobbled a little. "Take it easy, Rick," Dean said softly. "I'm okay," he replied. "I'm alright. I got it." Dean stepped aside and let Rick through the doorway. They went into the living room where Otis, the one who shot Carl, and Maggie, Hershel's daughter, sat. "He's stable for now," Shane informed him. "Lori has to be here, Shane. She has to know." "Okay," Shane responded. "I get that. And we're gonna handle it. But you gotta handle your end." Rick seemed confused. "My end?" "Your end is bein' here, for your son. Even if he didn't need your blood to survive, there's no way I'd let you walk out that door, man."

"I'd break your legs if you tried. I mean, you know that, right?" Rick looked down. "Figure something happen to him and you weren't here? If he slipped away while you were gone, you would never forgive yourself for that. And neither would Lori, man. Rick sat back up. "You're right." "When am I ever wrong?" Shane asked with a smirk. "Carl needs you," Dean said. Rick looked at him for a brief moment, then just nodded.

Everyone still followed behind Daryl through the woods. "We'll lose the light 'fore too long," he informed everyone. "Let's head back," Carol said then looked at Lori. "We'll pick it up again tomorrow?" "We'll find her tomorrow," Lori answered with a nod. Daryl whistled, motioning for everyone to follow him and they did so. They came up on some tall grass, forcing them to take large steps to make their way through. "How much farther?" Andrea asked. "Not much," Daryl answered. "Maybe a hundred yards. As a crow flies." "Too bad we aren't crows," she said. Everyone was worn out and tired. They all needed a break. But Daryl was persistent on getting back to the highway. Rylee raised an eyebrow when she heard something strange. It didn't sound like an animal. And it sure as hell didn't sound like one of them. It sounded like— She turned just in time to see Andrea stumble backwards. Everyone turned and looked around, hearing her scream but not seeing her anywhere. They followed her cries for help. Carol, Glen, Daryl, Lori, and Rylee all ran as fast as they could. Andrea was now on the ground and the walker was grabbing onto her feet as she kicked at it. But someone else had gotten there before them. Out of nowhere, a horse galloped straight to Andrea. It bolted by the walker, and it was sent to the ground. "Who the hell is that?" Rylee asked surprised. It was a female with short brunette hair. She looked down to Andrea. "Lori? Lori Grimes?" "I'm Lori," Lori called out. "Rick sent me. You gotta come now." "What?" Lori asked, slightly panicked. "There's been an accident. Carl's been shot." The expression on Lori's face changed to pure terror. "He's still alive, but you've gotta come now." She didn't move. "Rick needs you. Just come!" the girl on the horse demanded. Lori started to take her backpack off, but Daryl intervened. "Woah, woah, woah. We don't know this girl!" he said as he pointed a finger at her. "You can't get on tha' horse!" "Rick said you had others on the highway?" She then proceeded to give them directions to where she was taking Lori. And with that, they rode off into the woods.

They heard growling again, and the walker that attacked Andrea sat up. Daryl lifted his crossbow. "Shut up," he snarled as he sent an arrow through its head. "Damnit, Daryl! I told you, didn't I? I knew somethin' was wrong," Rylee said to him. He made his way over to the walker and pulled his arrow out of its head. Then he pointed it at Rylee. "Y'know, I'm gettin' real sick o' yer smart ass mouth. Keep on and I might jus' finish the job like I shoulda done on tha highway." Rylee let out a defeated sigh. Fighting with Daryl was already getting old. "Okay," she said quietly. "Wha'?" he asked, obviously surprised by her reply. "I said okay." He stared at her for a moment, looking a little confused. But then he nodded his head. "Alrigh'."

They eventually made their way back to the highway and rested. After dark, Daryl and Andrea had gone on a walk to see if they could find Sophia and Rylee settled herself in a car and had gone to sleep.

It was dark. The walls of the narrow hallway seemed almost to be collapsing on top of her. She couldn't breathe. She couldn't think.

It was all happening too fast. They were coming at her from both ends of the passageway and their growling kept getting louder and louder. She was out of ammo and didn't have anything to defend herself with. Sweat rolled down her face and her chest heaved. This just might be it: the end of her. All of her fears would be confirmed. She would lose everything she had so desperately tried to keep in a world like this. Their growling suddenly sounded far off, like she was off in a different place, but they were still coming at her. Her heart felt like it was in her throat and she could hear it her ears. It was the loudest sound she could hear. The feeling of cold, dead fingers on her arm sent her stumbling and her back hit the wall behind her. There was nothing she could do. It was all going to end. Right here. They were all around her by this point. Their empty, gray eyes, matching the color of rain clouds, stared right back into her soul. She tried to fight them off, but a sharp pain shot up her left arm. She screamed out, but it made no noise. Her legs seemed to have fell out from underneath her and she sunk to the ground. "Rylee! Get up," a voice called. It was a familiar voice, but she couldn't remember who it was. "Hey! Get the hell up!" She felt like she was being shaken. _

Rylee grabbed her knife and held it up against someone's throat and her eye shot open. "Woah! Tha hell's wrong wichu?!" It was Daryl. She slowly lowered the blade, trying to catch her breath and wiped the sweat from her forehead. "Sorry," she breathed out. He looked at her curiously. "Have a bad dream or somethin'?" he asked. Rylee sighed. "Yeah." Daryl then smirked at her. "I wouldn't tryna kill ya, was I?" She scoffed. "I'm not scared of you." He chuckled, then got up out of the car. "Come on. We're leavin'."

After he walked away, she was still shaken up. She slid her knife into her backpack she had sitting in the floor board then raised up with a grunt. The back seats to that car wasn't comfortable at all and left her with an aching back. She climbed out of the car, then slung the bag over her shoulders. "Good morning, sunshine," Dale called as she approached the RV. "Mornin'. RV's ready to go I'm assumin'." "She sure is," he responded. "Good. Let's get to that farm. If Rick's there, chances are Dean is too." Rylee went on passed the RV and passed Daryl heading towards Dean's four-wheeler. After pulling the keys out of her pocket, she sat down and turned on the engine. She pulled it off to the side, allowing Daryl and Dale to get passed her. "Ya'll lead the way," she said.

6. Season 2: Chapter 6

They all turned onto a dirt road that led past some pastures. They kept going until they saw a white farm house. Guess that's it, Rylee thought to herself. And it was. They all pulled into the front yard and parked their vehicles, turning them off. As soon as they did, Rick and Lori came out of the house and onto the porch, followed by T-Dog, Dean, and an older man with snow white hair. "Good to see you're alive and breathin'," Rylee called out to him. "Yeah. Same for you," he said. They all stepped off the porch and Rick walked over. "How is he?" Dale asked. "He'll pull through," Lori said with a smile. "Thanks to Hershel and his people and" "And Shane," Rick finished. "It would've been a lost cause if not for him." "I'm happy to hear that," Rylee said. Dale stepped forward and pulled Rick into a hug. Carol also stepped up and hugged Lori. Rylee looked up as she saw Dean approaching. "Well, since everybody's huggin'" He

held his arms up, but Rylee held up her hand. "No need. Jus' happy you're okay." "How'd it happen?" Dale asked Rick. "Hunting accident," he answered. "That's all. Just a stupid accident. Rylee looked over at Shane, who seemed a little uneasy, but she ignored it.

After a few moments of greeting and talking amongst one another, they all met under a tree for Otis's funeral, which was the one who had accidentally shot Carl. He had gone to get the supplies to operate on Carl with Shane, but didn't make it. They all stood around the rock pile they had made for him under the shade of the tree. Hershel, who stood off to the side, read his bible. Rylee didn't pay much attention, though. She was never strong in faith, and often grew annoyed when someone talked about the man upstairs. But this was a funeral service. She had a little more respect than to roll her eyes as Hershel read. But she couldn't help but to think about all this. It was strange holding a funeral for someone. So many people have died that she knew that went without one. She didn't really think people did things like this anymore. She looked over at Shane again, who still seemed uneasy. It must have been because he was the last person with him. Maybe he blamed himself for not saving Otis. "Shane," Hershel said. He looked over, responding to him. But he seemed a little distracted, like he was thinking of something. "Will you speak for Otis?" He looked over at everyone, then turned back. "Not good at it," he mumbled. "I'm sorry." "You were the last one with him," his wife, Patricia, told him with a crackly voice. "You shared his final moments. Pleaseâ€¦I need to hear. I need to know his death had meaning." He looked down and swallowed. I looked over a Dean, who was just looking at the ground. "We were about done," Shane finally said. "I wish I had the ammo. We'd be down to pistols by then. I was limpin'â€¦it was badâ€¦ankle all swollen upâ€¦'We gotta save the boy'â€¦that's what he saidâ€¦" It seemed like he was trying to avoid eye contact with Patricia. Something also seemed a little off, like he wasn't telling everything. "He gave me his backpack, he shoved me aheadâ€¦'Run,' he said. He said, 'I'll take the rear, I'll cover you.' And when I looked backâ€¦" He didn't finish, just trailed off. He then turned and limped over to the wheel barrel next to the pile of rocks and grabbed one out. "If not for Otis, I'da never made it out alive. And that goes for Carl, too." He looked down briefly. "He saved us both." Dean was now looking at Shane strangely as he spoke. He must have noticed the same thing Rylee did. But once he was done, he placed the rock onto Otis's grave and stepped away.

After Otis's service, the 'search party' surrounded the hood of a car. "How long has this little girl been lost?" Hershel asked. "This'll be day three," Rick answered. Maggie carried something over and spread it out over the hood of the car. "County Survey Map. Shows terrain and elevations." "This is perfect," Rick said. "We can finally get this thing organized. We'll grid the whole area, start searching in teams." "Not you, not today," Hershel interrupted. "You gave three units of blood. You wouldn't be hiking five minutes in this heat before passing out." He then turned to Shane. "And your ankle, push it now and you'll be laid up a month. No good to anybody." "Guess it's just me," Daryl said then pointed to the map. "I'ma head back to tha creek, work my way from there." "I could still be useful," Shane said. "I could drive up the interstate, see if Sophia wondered back." Dean patted Rylee on the shoulder. "We're gonna look too. Since Daryl's headed back to the creek, we'll look around near that church and see if we at least get a lead on 'er." Rick nodded. "Alright, tomorrow then," he said, looking around at

everyone. "We'll start doing this right." "That means we can't have our people out there with just knives," Shane told him. They stood there and talked amongst themselves before parting ways. Dean and Rylee walked beside Rick, who then stopped and turned to them. "Ya'll don't think you could go with Daryl, do you?" They looked at each other, then Dean turned back to Rick. "I don't think that's a good idea. I can't go with him, 'cause I can't leave Rylee alone. I can't send her with 'im 'cause one of 'em will probably kill the other. It might be best this way, so we can cover more ground. Daryl seems to take care of himself pretty well. I'm sure he'll be fine on his own." Rick just looked down for a brief moment, then back up to them. "Alright. Just do me a favor and keep your eyes and ears open in case something happens." "Can do," Dean said, then the two turned and headed for the small church.

Once they made it there, they walked through the graveyard looking around. "We've already been here, Dean. I'm telling you, she hasn't been here." "Couldn't hurt to double check," he mumbled back. Rylee was just about done looking for this girl. If she was alive, they most likely would've found her by now. After thinking this to herself, she stopped walking. "Do you think we're really gonna find her?" He just kept moving. "Gotta hope we do." "But do you?" He gave a frustrated sigh, then turned around. "I don't know. There's no way to know. But we have to find her. We just have toâ€¦" Dean started moving, but stopped again when Rylee asked him, "Why don't we just go?" "I ain't havin' 'is conversation with you again, Rylee." She rolled her eyes and folded her arms. "I shouldn't have to say this again: they ain't our problem." They stood there in silence for a moment as Dean looked around. "She's twelve. Twelve years old, out here in the wilderness." She was growing impatient with him, but he took a few steps forward. "If it was your kid aren't here, you wouldn't give up lookin'." "Hey, don't you bring my kid into this," she spat at him. "We made a deal. You don't bring up any of my family, I don't bring up any of yours. You ain't the only one who knows shit about the other." His eyes were on the ground now and he had his hands on his hips. Dean knew better than to reply to that. "That girl ain't mine. And she ain't yer's neither," Rylee then finished. That earned her a glance with a raised eyebrow. "I didn't do anything," he said softly. She gave him a confused look. "We sat there behind a damn car and watched the whole thing go down, didn't even do anything." She couldn't believe her ears. Was he really blaming them for that little girl getting lost? "You can't be serious with me right now," Rylee said to him. He sighed once more but she continued. "How can we have anything to do with her getting' lost? We don't even know her. And here we are bein' dumbasses and puttin' ourselves in danger to find her. She's not my baby and she's not your little sister." "I don't blame you for anything," Dean said as he looked back up. Rylee stepped towards him. "So you're blamin' yourself?" she asked but gained no reply. "This group and their peopleâ€¦ it ain't on us. We're just a couple of strangers that showed up on the highway. We shoulda just grabbed some shit and left." "If it wouldn't be for those people," Dean said, pointing in no particular direction, "we'd be dead right now." "What makes you so sure of that?" Rylee retorted. Dean started to storm away, but Rylee followed. They walked back up to the church, but Rylee grabbed Dean's arm. "Don't walk away from me!" He jerked his arm away from her and glared into her eyes. "We could've kept moving. We'd be far by now." "We shoulda kept movin', huh?" Telling by his body language, Rylee knew Dean was getting heated. "Where the hell would we be by now? Huh? Where would we be, stuck back in a warehouse? Or maybe back into

another old fuckin' shed? One of us bleedin' out n' runnin' a fever from a deadly bite? We'd jus' be on the road. There ain't nowhere else for us to go now. I'm tryin' to keep you alive. Like it or not, we're stayin' with this group unless they throw us out. And if they do, you're gonna wish you weren't so damn eager to get away. You need to stop thinkin' 'bout yourself. Imagine yourself twelve years old and sittin' up against a tree cryin' 'cause you didn't know your way back. Just imagine being terrified of a pack of deadlies comin' up on you at any moment. You ever fear for your life? 'Cause that's what she's doin' right now." He left Rylee absolutely speechless. She just stood there as he walked away in the opposite direction of the church. "Come on. Let's keep lookin'," he called over his shoulder.

They looked for a few hours, then headed back to the farm. They made their way over to the four-wheeler and Dean started going through a bag he had strapped on the side. "We should set up camp in one of these fields. I'm sure they might not feel comfortable with us bein' too close since they don't know us very well." "Well, I mean, you were there for Rick when his kid was shot and we're helpin' them look for Sophia. I'm sure they trust us." "Wow, you care enough to know her name," Dean mumbled without looking up. Rylee then rubbed her forehead. "Look, if it'll make you happy, I'll try harder, alright? I get it. We owe them." He looked at her, slightly shocked that she finally agreed to help more. But without replying, he grabbed what he was looking for and headed off into a different direction.

Once it got late, Rylee grabbaed her bow and arrow decided to go in and check on Rick's son. She stepped inside to see Rick sitting next to the bed and him and Carl both looked up. "How ya feelin', little man?" "I'm okay," he said quietly with a smile. Rylee gave a smile right back. "You're a tough kid. First time I got shot, I didn't do nothin' but sit there and complain the whole time." They both laughed, but Rylee looked over to see Rick's eyes on her. "I was just out and about," she told him. "Felt like I should just check in and see how he's doin'." "Did you find Sophia?" Carl asked weakly. Rylee frowned. "No—we didn't find her. We tried, but—" Her voice tailed off. "I think you will," Carl said. Rylee looked down then over to him. "We're gonna try our best, I promise you that. I'm gonna do everything in my power to bring your friend back." Another smile grew across Carl's face but Rick's voice filled the room. "Thank you," he said. "Nah, thank Dean," she replied as she leaned up against the doorway. "He's the one pushin' us so hard. He kinda feels responsible for Sophia goin' missin'. I don't know what kinda logic he used to get to that conculsion." Rylee looked down and twiddled her thumbs. "We were there—when the dealies—er, walkers, came by. We watched it. I guess we were too scared to come out after they left 'cause, y'know—can't really trust everyone these days. Guess he blames himself 'cause he didn't do anything. Hell, I didn't do much either." Rick hesitated before saying, "It wasn't on either of you. Or any of us." Rylee just nodded. "Guess so," she said then turned back to Carl. "You get to feelin' better, alright? I'll see ya'll in the mornin'." "Goodnight," Carl said. "Night, little man."

She exited the house then stopped to take a deep breath of fresh air. It was nice at this farm. Rylee hasn't been in peace like this since the turn. The people here were just completely shut off from the inside world. She wouldn't mind living here at all, but she wasn't sure if that was going to happen. When Rylee looked up, she saw a fire off in the distance way off in the field. It was over at Daryl's

camp. He had separated himself from the others and made his camp way up on the hill. She sighed to herself, then headed to the pasture and made her way over there.

Daryl was sitting next his fire just staring into it when Rylee walked up. "Ah, what tha hell do you want?" he asked once he noticed her approaching. She stopped and looked down with a sigh. "Look, I know we got off on a rough start. I have no idea if Rick is gonna make me n' Dean part of your group now, but if he does-" "He won't," Daryl said, cutting her off. "Once we don't need ya anymore, we'll send ya packin'. Hell, we don't need ya righ' now." "And here I am still standing here," she replied. He looked back into the fire. "What're ya here for anyway?" Rylee looked around at the dark tree line that was engulfed by blackness. The firelight spread light on the bark of the trees, but shadow still overcame it. If felt almost as if she were staring into the entrance of a deep, dark tomb. But she then said to Daryl, "Plannin' on goin' huntin'. Dean's asleep and none of the others don't have any experience. I thought it'd be best if somebody went with me in case I see the girl, so she ain't scared of me. I imagine you'd be one of the first one's she'd run to." Daryl didn't reply and she put a hand on her hip. "You comin' or what?" she asked. "Go hunt yer damn self," he answered. "Alright," she said. "Piss on you then." She turned to walk off, but then he called out to her. "Hey." Rylee turned and faced him. He seemed to have hesitated a moment, then reached over and picked up his crossbow and stood up off of the ground. He met eyes with Rylee, who just stood there. "Well, ya can't go wonderin' off by yourself. And lookin' for Sophia ain't a bad idea. Ain't got nothin' else ta do."

Daryl followed Rylee into the woods and they quietly moved forward. "Soâ€|who taught ya how to hunt?" Rylee asked and Daryl gave her a strange look. "Well, if we're gonna be out here, might as well try to make conversation." He rolled his eyes at her. "Fine. We don't have to talk," she said. "Where the hell did you two come from anyway?" Daryl asked. Rylee sighed. "Outside of Atlanta. We got run off by deadlies. There was an explosion in the city that lured 'em to our camp. There were two more, but they stayed back." They moved forward a little bit more before Daryl asked, "Why'd they stay?" "Man's wife was bit. She was turnin' and he chose to stay with her." He scoffed and looked the other way. "I told Dean we shoulda killed her, but her husband wouldn't have that. Dean didn't really wanna have to do it either." Rylee then looked down thinking about Jameson and Samantha. "Well, I'll tell ya somethin'," Daryl said. "That little boyfriend 'o yer's needs ta grow a set if he wants ta survive in this world." "Eh, he ain't my boyfriend. He's more like a partner. Just somebody who's tryin' to look after me." Daryl shook his head and the two maneuvered through the trees. "Is that so?" he asked sarcastically. "Yeah," Rylee retorted. Daryl's eyes stayed on the ground. He looked for a moment, then said something without looking up. "That explosion in Atlanta, tha' was tha C.D.C." Rylee stopped and looked up. "How do you know that?" she asked. "I was there," Daryl answered. "Place jus' blew up. Damn scientist at the place tried to lock us in and kill us all. That conversation 'tween Dale and Andrea? She wanted to stay once the doors got open. Dale tried to stop her butâ€|well, you heard 'em talkin'." "Wait, there was a scientist there?" Rylee asked in shock. "Did he know anything? Y'know, about the turn? How it was caused? Anything?" There was a silent moment bfore Daryl answered quietly. "Noâ€|he didn't know nothin'." Rylee just looked down, slightly disappointed. She couldn't help back to get her hopes up.

It wasn't long before they somehow made it to the creek. They both looked around, trying to find anymore tracks, but found nothing. "She's gotta be around here somewhere. She wouldn't just wonder off somewhere elseâ€¦would she?" Rylee asked Daryl. He shook his head. "Nah. I don't think so." He then sighed and got off the ground. "I've searched this damn creek too many times. She ain't here." "So, what now?" Rylee asked. He looked down for a brief moment. "Let's call it a nigh'. Head back to tha farm." She nodded in agreement. "Lead the way," she said and they made their way back.

End
file.